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ABSTRACT

One of the major activities of the Urban Literacy Network (ULN) is a grants program aimed at supporting cooperative, collaborative approaches to developing resources and support systems for literacy in urban areas. Eleven grants were awarded in 1987-1988 in the following urban areas: Boston; Chicago; Denver; El Paso; Houston; Nashville; Oklahoma City; St. Louis; San Diego; Tucson; and Washington, D.C. The ULN grants program offered an important opportunity to contribute to the knowledge base about the nature of the urban literacy context, particularly with regard to the value of cooperative and collaborative approaches to developing resources and sustaining support over time. The delivery system of programs and services addressing the need of nonliterate adults was found to be particularly diverse and fractionalized in urban areas. The funders of these programs were similarly diverse. They included many public agencies at all levels of government, corporations, philanthropic organizations, and individuals with widely ranging motives. Illiteracy was found to be an invisible handicap affecting adults of all classes, ethnic groups, and ages. Literacy was discovered to be a complex political issue, with many of its aspects being hotly debated at certain times and carefully sidestepped at others. (Half of this report is devoted to summaries of ULN grant projects in the 11 cities that received grants in 1987-1988.) (MN)

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COOPERATIVE EFFORTS IN URBAN LITERACY:

LEARNINGS FROM THE URBAN LITERACY NETWORK'S GRANT PROJECTS

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INTRODUCTION

The past decade has witnessed an explosion of interest in and awareness about the serious problem of illiteracy in America and its consequences. Though the literacy problem and the field that has grown to address it are far from new, a number of diverse forces have converged to focus increased attention and resources aimed at reducing the disturbingly large population of adults who lack basic literacy skills.

Much of this attention has focused on the special problems and characteristics of large urban areas. These contexts of high population density and myriad related social, economic, cultural, and political factors seem to pose unique and confounding obstacles to reducing the illiteracy rate, while at the same time containing a broader array of the conditions and resources essential to success. The emphasis of the Urban Literacy Network on these environments reflects an appreciation of the need to view urban areas as unique contexts, to learn about the forces and factors that influence literacy efforts in them, and to provide direct assistance to those who are attempting to address the idiosyncratic challenges and opportunities they contain.

A major activity of the Urban Literacy Network was a grants program aimed at supporting cooperative, collaborative approaches to developing resources and support systems for literacy in urban areas. Eleven grants were awarded in 1987-88 to groups in the following urban areas: Boston, Chicago, Denver, El Paso, Houston, Nashville, Oklahoma City, St. Louis, San Diego, Tucson, and metropolitan Washington, D.C.

The grants program of the Urban Literacy Network offered an important opportunity to contribute to the knowledge base about the nature of the urban literacy context, particularly with regard to the value of cooperative and collaborative approaches to developing resources and sustaining support over time. To address this goal, the ULN Policy and Planning Board sponsored an evaluation of the Network, one component of which focused on the grants program and the viability of the cooperative efforts it supported. The evaluation was conducted by the Center for Resource Management, Inc. (CRM) of South Hampton, New Hampshire, under the direction of Martha Williams.

The evaluation process and findings helped to develop and affirm many insights, and this paper presents a brief summary of the major themes that emerged. Descriptions of the eleven grant projects are appended.

THE LITERACY CONTEXT IN URBAN AREAS

Many of the insights gained and affirmed about cooperative approaches to literacy in urban areas apply equally well to non-urban areas. However, the proliferation and intensity of a number of contextual factors seem to be accentuated in large cities. Among the contextual factors noted as significantly influencing how the literacy issue can and must be approached are:

The Delivery of Literacy Services. The delivery system of programs and services that address the needs of non-literate adults is diverse and fractionalized, particularly in urban areas. Service programs are operated by a wide range of organizations, including community-based organizations, adult basic education agencies, colleges and universities, libraries, volunteer organizations, churches, and corporations. These diverse providers utilize a wide range of approaches and methods for recruiting, assessing, instructing, and supporting program participants.

The Funders of Literacy Programs and Services. The funders of literacy programs and services represent the broad range of stakeholders with a vested interest in literacy. They include many public agencies at the local, state, and federal levels; corporations; foundations and other philanthropic organizations; and individuals.

The Motives of Stakeholders. A number of motives stimulate the investment and involvement in literacy within dense population centers. In some urban areas, labor shortages fuel interest in the problem of illiteracy, since it is a major impediment to productivity and competitiveness. In less economically vital urban areas, concerns about the high cost of the consequences of illiteracy tend to motivate the involvement of various constituencies, who recognize that the costs of welfare, crime, incarceration, and homelessness are among the social and economic costs of illiteracy. Still others are motivated by a value orientation toward basic literacy skills as a fundamental right and a prerequisite to a meaningful and satisfying life.

The Population of Illiterate Adults. Illiteracy is an invisible handicap that affects individuals of all classes, ethnic groups, and ages. Many who lack basic literacy skills are confined to chronic unemployment (or underemployment) and poverty. Illiterate adults are heavily concentrated in urban areas, and they represent enormous diversity in background, native language, and readiness and motivation to participate successfully in learning opportunities.

The Politics of Literacy. Literacy is a complex political issue, aspects of which are hotly debated at times and carefully sidestepped at others. One political issue centers around competing priorities of literacy and educational reform. Another political issue surrounds the different strategies and approaches pursued by various groups. For example, some initiatives, such as the PLUS campaign, stress public awareness as a major strategy. Other initiatives stress the importance of building the response and service capacity of the delivery system prior to mobilizing public action and demand. These approaches often conflict with each other in dysfunctional ways that mask the need for both and the importance of an integrated approach.

Finally, a number of political issues affecting some policy and resource allocation decisions are under the surface and rarely acknowledged. The threat of an enfranchised lower class, newly equipped with the skills needed to vote, no doubt has constrained the vigor of some for addressing the problem. Equally constraining has been the attitude that it is the individual's responsibility—not society's — to see that basic needs are met.

COOPERATIVE URBAN LITERACY EFFORTS: FUNDAMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS

The Urban Literacy Network's grants program was grounded in several fundamental assumptions regarding urban literacy contexts and the most effective approaches for expanding the involvement, commitment, and support of the many stakeholders on whom success depends. These assumptions were strongly affirmed through the experience of the first eleven grant projects. They are:

1) that effective and sufficient literacy services for adults in the urban area is the outcome that all literacy programs are working toward;

2) that to meet this outcome, there are issues that are of concern to many groups and functions that are needed across programs in an urban area; addressing these requires cooperative efforts;

3) that these issues and functions can be addressed by programs, learners and community contacts working together as an informal collective or from a centralized organizational base;

4) that diversity in the literacy field is a "fact of life" — a reality that both complicates and enhances the field, but an enduring reality nevertheless;

5) that diverse delivery systems that capitalize on the broad range of motives, contexts, resources, and approaches hold the greatest promise for meeting the diverse needs and circumstances of adult learners;

6) that the task of starting new service delivery programs and strengthening existing programs depends on mobilizing long term resource investments from multiple sources;

7) that cooperation among the diverse stakeholders — policy makers, funders, providers, and consumers — is essential to developing and sustaining the resources necessary to meet the needs of adult learners cost effectively;

8) that the type of cooperation needed is difficult and time consuming to establish and maintain — it requires focused attention from a credible and effective source to overcome conflicts and deal with complex forces; and

9) that urban areas face unique challenges in their efforts to establish and maintain cooperative literacy efforts.

GRANT PROJECT PROGRESS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The grant projects faced many formidable challenges in focusing the energies of many diverse stakeholders toward a set of objectives for the first year of ULN funding. Much was learned about the eleven areas in particular and about the factors that influence progress and results. These are summarized below.

Substantial differences existed in the eleven urban areas prior to receiving ULN funding and during start-up. The eleven projects underscore the reality that diversity truly is the dominant characteristic of the literacy field, particularly in the context of the large urban areas. Though in only one case was there a well-developed coalition, some type of network, coordinating body, or coalition existed in all but one urban area. In all cases, the need for coordination through a formal and ongoing structure was recognized by a least a core group of literacy leaders prior to receiving the grant announcement. Indeed, the focus of the funding and the requirements for selection virtually guaranteed that applications would be limited to those areas where the value of cooperation was reasonably well-established. Nevertheless, the eleven areas represent a range from a strong, mandated and funded coalition with widespread support to an impotent network involving few constituencies.

Project Literacy US — the "PLUS" campaign sponsored by ABC and PBS to expand awareness of the importance of literacy and the availability of services— played various roles in the initiative to pursue ULN funding and in early stages of the cooperative effort. In several cases, the PLUS Task Force became the fledgling coalition that pursued ULN funding. In other cases, PLUS was peripheral to the effort; in one case it had been a negative influence due to the lack of coordination between those involved in PLUS and the providers, where demand for services and the supply of volunteers had been stimulated by PLUS with insufficient response capability created.

In many urban areas, the opportunity to obtain ULN funding helped to focus and broaden an existing network or coalition. In this sense, the rather rigorous requirements of the grant application helped to strengthen local efforts to build a collaborative structure and served to reinforce the appropriateness of that effort. In many of the urban areas, the primary motivation for pursuing ULN funding was based on the desire to create stronger local coordination, most often by funding staff work associated with needs assessment, creating a coordinating organization and structure, and developing commitments; this motivation appears to have been totally genuine, despite the grants program's obvious emphasis on coordination.

In several cases, the type of needs assessment called for in the grant application got additional stakeholders involved in systematically examining their communities from many perspectives — such as needs, resources, approaches, structures, and leadership.

The start-up experiences and evolution of the eleven grantees are more similar than different. To varying degrees, project directors struggled to overcome long-standing and sometimes intractable conflicts over approach, turf, and power. Those who were well established in the literacy, business, and government communities — or at least some combination of these — had an easier time building credibility for the effort and securing the involvement and investment of key stakeholders in the process. Trust remained a major issue in many areas;

the credibility, diligence, perceived neutrality, and skillfulness of the project director were significant factors in overcoming these start-up issues.

Progress toward objectives was much more difficult and the threats to success more serious than initially anticipated. In all cases, project directors reported frustration with the pace of accomplishments -- the process took far longer, was more fragile, and to some extent less successful than they had anticipated. One of the major challenges was to define a mission and set of goals that were both meaningful and widely acceptable. Another major task was to develop procedures and norms for making decisions and communicating with members. Finally, the issues of membership and continuity of participation bogged down several groups as they tried to move forward on objectives and action plans.

Progress and perceived value of many cooperative efforts were enhanced by their ability to define a "niche" in the literacy context. Several of the projects "sunk their teeth into" activities that proved helpful in forging collaborative relationships for the long term and in building a widespread sense of the value of the cooperative effort. In addition, certain activities seem to fill important gaps in the literacy system in ways that allow the cooperative effort to establish a "niche" in the broader context. Activities such as community needs assessment, the development of a hotline, resource development, creating directories and otherwise enhancing information sharing, all seemed sufficiently valuable and non-threatening activities for the fledgling cooperative effort.

Approaches to resource development that emphasized more than money --human resources, system development, in-kind contributions, etc. -- had the best chance of achieving results and building broad commitment. The clear focus of the grants program is resource development, broadly defined. In most cases, this was an activity that local constituencies could get behind, with some important caveats. First, resource development had to be approached systematically, with carefully established goals, sound strategies, communication systems, and mechanisms for changing plans if necessary. Those that did not approach resource development systematically quickly triggered the concerns of constituents (particularly providers) that the cooperative effort would be a competitor or gatekeeper for funds for their programs.

Projects that were able to define a clear mission, pursue a focused and non-threatening set of tangible activities, and meaningfully involve and inform key stakeholders seemed to weather the many start-up obstacles they faced. All of the projects made fairly substantial adjustments in the scope and nature of what they proposed, most often because the initial plans were overly ambitious given the resources available and the need for extensive nurturing of key relationships. Those that remained focused on a clear -- and shared -- mission, involved key people, and sensitively but aggressively pursue their goals succeeded in establishing a viable and ongoing structure.

There seems to be no "generic" model that is relevant to all urban areas. There seems to be no "ideal" or generic model, or set of models, that are widely applicable to diverse urban areas. Contextual factors -- history, politics, people, organizational relationships, priorities, etc. -- will likely be sufficiently idiosyncratic as to defy direct adoption of a model developed in one urban area to another. Instead of searching for such a model, attention can be usefully focused on understanding the factors, conditions, and strategies that meet the goals of optimum cooperation, broad and enduring investment, extensive community awareness, widespread support, and appropriate functions.

Certain core values that have been clarified and affirmed over the course of the year stand as significant and enduring guideposts to the work of the Urban Literacy Network and the development of cooperative urban literacy efforts. A number of implicit values have guided the design and direction of the Network since its inception. These values have been clarified over time and were strongly affirmed through the evaluation. They include:

- The desirability of a diverse delivery system for literacy at the local, state, and national levels;

- The value of cooperation, collaboration, and communication around common goals and shared agendas, using a variety of structures and approaches appropriate to the context and level of development of the larger literacy system;

- The fundamental importance of strong connections to, participation by, and influence of learners and practitioners;

- A commitment to overall resource development and broad investment in the goal of universal literacy; and

- A commitment to program quality, accountability, and impact.

ELEMENTS OF "COOPERATION" AND "COLLABORATION"

Based on the experience of these first eleven projects, a clearer concept of cooperation and collaboration is emerging, with the following elements:

- diverse groups with a core of common interests that come together to advance those particular interests;
- a structure that permits diverse groups to speak and act with one voice while retaining their distinct and sometimes opposing goals and positions on other matters;
- a "culture" or set of norms characterized by respect, honesty, mutual benefit, compromise, and equal status of all; manipulation, deceit, and misrepresentation are actively rejected by all members;
- leadership that is geared toward being inclusive rather than exclusive, facilitating and enabling rather than controlling, and that models and enforces key norms in a way that helps others learn;
- a clear structure and operational guidelines (bylaws, agreements, etc.) to guide ongoing activities;
- specific functions and action plans that are coherent, concrete, and actionable;
- the absence of competition for funds, attention, prominence, etc. between the coalition and its members or constituents;
- a focus on overall resource development that extends beyond raising funds to developing a broad and enduring foundation of investment and commitment;
- explicit core values of universal literacy and full access to services by all who need them;
- involvement, support, and endorsement of high level government officials and other community leaders; and
- extensive communication with membership around activities, successes, needs, activities of members, and what's going on in other communities.

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF AND OPTIONS FOR COOPERATIVE LITERACY EFFORTS

Initiators of Cooperative Efforts Cooperative literacy efforts have been initiated by a wide range of organizations and individuals. These include:

PLUS Task Force
Mayors Office
Group of Providers
Corporation
Foundation
Newspaper
Community College
Community Agency
City or County Office
County Commissioner
City Council
United Way
Public Library
School District
Individual

Leadership Skills and Approaches. The sensitivity and competence of leaders of cooperative efforts is, not surprisingly, a major factor influencing success and long term viability. During a session to discuss preliminary evaluation findings at the June meeting of project directors, a list of required tasks and competencies of directors of cooperative urban literacy efforts was generated. This list, shown below, clearly suggests that such efforts require highly experienced and talented individuals, particularly at the beginning. To some extent, these tasks and requirements can be fulfilled by a good board or coordinating council, if one already exists. Perhaps the most demanding set of skills, however, are those related to establishing such a group if none exists.

- Creativity, perspective, confidence, sense of humor
- System analysis; understanding the complex array of factors that comprise the broad literacy, human service, political, and economic context
- Needs assessment and planning
- Designing appropriate structures and organizational arrangements
- Forging effective relationships with diverse individuals and groups
- Translating information across diverse contexts and perspectives
- Facilitating meetings with high stakes agendas and complex dynamics
- Identifying, developing, and implementing core functions
- Resource development
- Conflict resolution and consensus building
- Developing and maintaining a clear vision
- Creating an identity; public relations
- Evaluating, monitoring, and administering grants

Needs and Functions Cooperative Literacy Efforts Address Cooperative efforts can engage in a variety of functions to address needs in the urban area. These include:

- Advocacy
- Clearinghouse, Library, Resource Center
- Community Needs Assessment
- Consultation to:
  - Programs
  - Service Agencies
  - Businesses
  - Government Agencies
- Conferences
- Coordination of Service Delivery Systems
- Data Collection/ Data Base Management
- Demonstration Projects
- Development of Instructional Resources
- Development of Program Resources
- Development of New Programs
- Directory of Services Available
- Evaluations
- Fund Development
- Fund Raising
- Information and Referral
- Newsletter
- Planning
- Policy Analysis
- Practitioner Support
- Program Leader Support
- Network/Retreat
- Public Relations
- Research
- Student Outreach
- Student Intake and Referral
- Student Congress/ Student Support Groups
- Systems for Assessment of Student Progress
- Technical Assistance
- Training Programs/Workshops/ Forums/Seminars for Programs Leaders, Practitioners and Policy Makers
- Volunteer Recruitment

Organizational Structure of Cooperative Efforts Organizational autonomy was cited by most project directors as an absolute must in developing cooperative efforts. Several aspects of autonomy were identified. First, organizational affiliation emerged as an important consideration. Many felt that the best arrangement was to be formed as a totally separate legal entity as a 501(c)(3) organization, thus able to receive and allocate funds independently while being accountable to a board. In some cases, the 501(c)(3) was housed in an existing organization. Another option that fits the reality of some was operating as a separate entity within another organization, using a separate, broadly representative board or committee to make funding decisions, etc. In short, structural options pursued by various cooperative efforts include:

- No formal structure
- Unincorporated, independent with by-laws and officers
- Incorporated as private non-profit organizations
- Housed in the Mayor's Office
- Housed in the County Commissioners' offices
- Partnership with non-literacy community non-profits
- Community non-profit acts as fiscal agent
- Literacy provider non-profit acts as fiscal agent

In addition to the organizational structure of the organization, other aspects of autonomy noted were neutrality and credibility. The type of representation on the coordinating body, or board of directors, is extremely important in this regard; decision makers must be representative of all key stakeholders and constituencies and must be able to function with the best interests of the community — not their own constituency or organization — uppermost in their minds. Members must be credible within their own constituency and trusted by their colleagues in the cooperative effort.

Each of these aspects of autonomy and credibility are seen as directly influencing the effort's viability over time and the degree to which it becomes successfully integrated into the overall literacy system and context in a complementary fashion.

Membership Options:

- Fee or non-fee
- Providers only or non-providers only or providers and non-providers

Types of Organizations or individuals that can be members:

- Local Education Agency
- Foundation
- Business/Industry
- Corporation
- Community Based Organization
- Library Program
- Adult Basic Education Program
- Community College Program
- Private Industry Council
- JTPA Program
- Social Services Agency
- Teachers Alliance
- RSVP Program
- Civic Groups
- Criminal Justice System
- Students
- Public Administrators
- Colleges/Universities
- Lawyers
- United Way
- Local Newspaper
- Mayor's Office
- City Council
- Community Leader
- Local Television or Radio Station
- Volunteer Program

THE IMPORTANCE OF A NATIONAL NETWORK TO SUPPORT COOPERATIVE URBAN LITERACY EFFORTS

The Urban Literacy Network was designed and functioned as a support system for the local urban cooperative efforts; those it sponsored through the grants program, and others. A key question, then, is whether or not the success and viability of urban cooperative efforts are enhanced by such a network, and, if so, by what specific activities and services.

Evaluation findings strongly suggest that several of the ULN's support activities, and the very existence of the Network itself, played a crucial role in their ability to launch and sustain an effective cooperative effort and to achieve specific results. Of particular importance to the grantee projects were the national conference, technical assistance and training, and the newsletter. In general, those support activities that represented the most intensive opportunities for substantive and supportive direct contact with colleagues were perceived as most valuable.

The national conference was perceived by many as the first national gathering that focused exclusively and extensively on cooperation and collaboration in urban areas as a primary strategy for addressing illiteracy. Without exception, the conference was described as a high point for participants, due to the combination of excellent topics, presenters, materials, networking opportunities, camaraderie, and organization.

The nature of the comments about the national conference strongly point to the value and importance of networking opportunities. Since the whole concept of direct support for the development and enhancement of cooperative urban literacy efforts is new, those involved in such efforts at all levels need opportunities to share their experiences and test their ideas with others. Objective and knowledgeable colleagues are few; a strong bond has been established among those involved in the Network.

The training provided to project directors at national gatherings and individual technical assistance to urban cooperative efforts were also cited as extremely valuable and of high quality. The ULN newsletter, "ISSUES", was perceived as a useful vehicle for receiving information on what is going on in other parts of the country and on resources and developments in the field. Periodically receiving this substantive and visual reminder of the national scope of the Network and cooperative urban literacy efforts were valuable to leaders of the effort and their constituents as well.

Universal affirmation was expressed by leaders of cooperative urban efforts about the value and importance of a national organization focused on the development and strengthening of cooperative literacy efforts in urban areas. Several commented that the presence of the Network lent a great deal of credibility to what they were trying to do, and that the grants program, along with the overall existence of the Network, underscored the value and importance of cooperation and communication.

The experience of the first year of the Urban Literacy Network has produced a rather extensive and rich body of knowledge about cooperative urban literacy efforts and the structures, activities, and leadership needed at the national level to support them. In addition, the value and appropriateness of cooperative approaches has been strongly affirmed as a key component of our nation's campaign to achieve universal literacy.

URBAN LITERACY NETWORK

1987 - 88

GRANT PROJECT SUMMARY REPORTS

BOSTON

Purpose

The grant established and staffed the Boston Adult Literacy Fund. The purpose of 88the Fund is to provide a mechanism for extensive and sustained fundraising primarily targeting the private sector; to expand and to strengthen adult literacy programs in the City of Boston; to create greater visibility for literacy programs and increase public awareness of the need for support; to serve as a coordinating entity for establishing and developing funding contacts for programs; to strengthen linkages between literacy programs and the private sector. A substantial portion of the funds raised will go toward an endowment in order to create much needed financial stability for these programs. Input was solicited from the directors of agencies providing literacy services for the development of the Fund's structure and funding priorities.

Accomplishments

-Established private sector board which is chaired by the publisher of the Boston Globe, it includes backing from influential individuals in Boston, including the Mayor.
-Established a fund-raising committee that is creating a plan to raise $5 million from the private sector.
-Developed a series of letters of introduction to the community which will be sent to corporations and foundations.
-Holding a major press conference led by Mayor in December to kick off the fund and create a media blitz.
-Developing local program and student profiles to be distributed in the community.
-Recruiting members for the community advisory council, which will develop funding priorities, establish request for proposal guidelines, and make allocation decisions.

Learnings

-Much planning and input from the community is needed from the beginning. This has to be input from potential recipients of the Fund as well as potential funders.

Contact

Boston Adult Literacy Fund
Marion Maroney
241 St. Botolph St.
Boston MA 02115
617 266-1891

CHICAGO

Purpose

This grant helped to form the Chicago Literacy Coordinating Center whose purpose is to support and coordinate the survival and growth of a diverse delivery system for literacy services to low-level (0-6th grade equivalent) adult new readers in Chicago. The Center's goal is to substantially increase the quantity and improve the quality of literacy services through: coordination of efforts; technical assistance and training of providers; private and public resource development; and general public awareness activities.

Accomplishments

-Established the Coordinating Center which grew in one year to a staff of five and a budget of $216,240.
-Established a hotline covering five counties.
-Began centralized volunteer recruitment and training to assist small community based providers.
-Started a private resource development project that connects private corporations to urban community based literacy sites - by adoption - to provide in-kind contributions, corporate volunteers and funds.
-Designed an educational program on literacy for the foundation community.
-Provide staff development and technical assistance on fund raising, program planning, and volunteer management for 20-25 community based literacy programs on an ongoing basis.

Learnings

-Interest in literacy surfaces from a variety of sources, making it very difficult to coordinate and to ensure quality control.
-Beginning with neighborhoods is an effective first step toward collaboration.
-Programs often find it difficult to believe that collaboration will financially benefit them directly.

Contact

Chicago Literacy Coordinating Center
Jody Raphael
28 East Jackson Blvd., Suite 1305
Chicago, IL 60604
(312) 939-5788

DENVER

Purpose

The purpose of the grant was to support the expansion of the Denver Metro Literacy Project into the Denver Literacy Coalition. The focus of the Denver Metro Literacy Project was to encourage cooperation and shared resource development, with specific goals: of raising $100,000 the first year; increasing in-kind donations; increasing student enrollment; and enhancing and expanding coordination and cooperation among all organizations supporting literacy in the Denver area.

Accomplishments

-Operated state-wide literacy Hotline; referred 10,000+ callers (students and volunteers) to training programs from Sept 1986 through June 1988.
-Published and distributed the first directory of literacy programs in Colorado, April, 1988.
-Facilitated cooperation among Colorado literacy programs; co-sponsored with Denver Metro PLUS a major awareness event - Cartoonists Across America.
-Printed and distributed "READ" business cards to social service agencies in cooperation with Denver Metro PLUS.
-Sponsored a workshop on dyslexia for program directors and volunteers tutors, September 1988.
-Collaborated on joint fundraising efforts: a) fall 1987 auction, b) follow-up fundraising letter to auction attendees, c) theater evening benefit.

Learnings

-It is difficult to establish coordination of literacy efforts in a state where there is no state funding for literacy.
-Building a coalition takes LOTS of time and patience; turf battles are a problem.
-A non-profit Board of Directors must be a "working" Board. The Board must be actively involved in fund-raising.
-Fundraising goals must be realistic.

Contact

Kathryn Curran and Virginia Hammond
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EL PASO

Purpose

The grant was used as start-up money to support administrative staff for operation of the El Paso Literacy Coalition. The Coalition promotes and supports literacy education programs; instigates and/or supports action to improve literacy programs; develops and influences public opinion in favor of literacy education. The Coalition combines a community-based, enriched learning environment, an intergenerational approach and organized involvement from local community organization, parents, educators and businesses to form a three-pronged assault on illiteracy.

Accomplishments

-Established the El Paso Literacy Coalition with a dues-paying membership of business, agencies and individuals.
-Compiled a list of funding sources and local foundations for use and reference by local literacy providers.
-Contracted for services of grant writer who prepared and sent out 28 proposals to national and regional foundations.
-Supported the Paso Del Norte Literacy Council (one of the oldest programs in the city) by giving them access to the grant writer to raise funds, thus enabling them to keep their doors open.
-Sponsored a Corporate Spelling Bee which raised funds for the Paso Del Norte Literacy Council.
-Provided clerical support for the Paso Del Norte Literacy Council.
-Held the PLUS Business Breakfast and recognized local businesses that have supported literacy for the community.
-Conducted a workshop on high school dropout problem and illiteracy.
-Surveyed literacy programs to document the programs' services and needs.

Learnings

-Difficulties in forming a coalition can come up because of turf issues.
-Local programs need the money that results from a Coalition but don't necessarily want to share information, etc.
-A full time director is even more important in a new coalition than originally realized. Community coalitions need strong leadership.
-Setting up administrative systems when starting a new organization take a lot of time.
-Board commitment is a very important factor in the make-up; as critical if not more critical than any one other factor.

Contact

El Paso Literacy Coalition
Pat Ayala
PO 3337
El Paso TX 79923
(915) 532-6628

HOUSTON

Purpose

The grant provided staff to organize and administer the new Houston READ Commission (formed by merging the READ Council, Houston's literacy coalition, the Mayor's Literacy Task Force). The Commission has an Advisory Board of service providers. It is establishing the organizational framework to coordinate literacy services city-wide through a computer-managed information and referral service. The grant helped the Commission toward its goal of raising $1 million in private funds in 1988 to support local literacy agencies and expand services to: reach underserved groups; support the efforts of current and prospective literacy providers through technical assistance, partnership projects and grants; showcase instructional approaches at a demonstration center; and improve access to literacy services by establishing neighborhood based centers in each quadrant of the city.

Accomplishments

-Established a demonstration technology center, integrating one on one tutoring with computer assisted multimedia curriculum, through a federal contract of $235,000.
-Developed a comprehensive action plan and an affiliation agreement for service providers which define roles and responsibilities of Commission and affiliated service providers as well as an overall funding policy and a variety of funding options through which service providers will obtain support from the Commission.

-Raised $700,000 toward $1 million goal from the local private sector. A request to ACTION for four VISTA volunteers has also been approved.
-Completed creation of the formal organizational structure from scratch.
-Developed a major partnership with Houston Chronicle - the President/Publisher is chairing the fundraising drive.

Learnings

-Obtaining JTPA funds for literacy projects and then operating a project within those constraints is a major endeavor.
-Partnership projects with a wide variety of organizations in every sector are important.
-Relationship between high powered community leaders and service providers must be developed. Affiliation agreements, definition of service providers and a funding policy and options should be clearly laid out.
-The process of addressing staffing questions, i.e. salary ranges, job descriptions, hiring policies, benefits, etc. to implement a comprehensive plan for a large urban area is difficult.
-The service providers have to work out how they will present themselves in the community so that the public understands how they are affiliated.

Contact

Houston READ Commission
Barbara Kazdan
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Houston TX 77002
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NASHVILLE

Purpose

Grant funds increased literacy services to low income, hard-to-reach households by assisting an existing housing project based program and by creating three new nontraditional neighborhood based programs. A coalition of public and private organizations formed to promote literacy programming particularly for poverty level clients of area social service agencies and to serve as a forum for networking and information sharing. Nashville's United Way and Council of Community Services played a key role in carrying out the grant activities. Existing volunteer literacy programs also received resources to expand their services.

Accomplishments

-Established five neighborhood literacy programs.
-Developed a coalition made up of literacy organizations and other individuals that provided support for the developing neighborhood programs and an avenue for increased coordination through information sharing and networking.
-Developed a literacy handbook and directory of programs to be used by social service agencies and businesses.
-Secured local funding to support the existing neighborhood programs.
-Stimulated the development of a proposal for literacy training among the homeless of Nashville and expand outreach and student recruitment of a computer-assisted literacy program.
-Achieved a high degree of student satisfaction as a result of participation in neighborhood based programs.

Learnings

-It is important to develop neighborhood-based programs for low-income adults and be learner-centered in the materials used.
-A variety of approaches is needed for different communities. Tutors need to be sensitive to learner needs and special concerns of community area.
-A variety of recruitment approaches for hard-to-reach low-income adults are needed.
-Collective approaches to service provision, funding and program development are important.
-In forming a new coalition you need to be clear on what the goals and objectives are, that they benefit the coalition members, and that they are flexible. Strong leadership is important.

Contact

LEAP/Nashville
Karen Franklin
Council of Community Services
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Nashville TN 37212
(615) 385-2057

OKLAHOMA CITY

Purpose

Grant funds provided personnel to develop and implement the formation of the Metropolitan Literacy Coalition. The Coalition acts as a resource for literacy services providers to support them in more effectively serving adult learners.

Accomplishments

-Formed the Literacy Coalition of Oklahoma County; established the Board, wrote and approved by-laws, formed committees and hired a Project Director.
-Prepared a statewide listing of literacy service providers which is widely used throughout the community.
-Meets monthly to share information and plan activities.
-Distributed coalition brochures to 400 social workers in Oklahoma County.
-Published a quarterly newsletter.
-Conducted a comprehensive survey in order to establish a resource library for the Coalition.
-Acts as a clearinghouse for Coalition members.
-Worked with General Motors to develop literacy programs for employees as well as provide tutors.

Learnings

-Coalition building is an on-going process; a lot of patience is required.
-The more services available the more demand there is for those services. The current programs need to build their capacity or new providers need to be developed.

Contact

Literacy Coalition of Oklahoma County
Elberta Steinel
131 Dean A. McGee Ave.
Oklahoma City OK 73102
(405) 235-0571

ST. LOUIS

Purpose

Grant funds supported a two part plan for the St. Louis PLUS Task Force that enabled it to more effectively support its membership of literacy service providers and in turn better serve the area's adult learners. Future plans of the Task Force include establishing a local hotline number and setting up procedures for handling and referring calls; continuing to promote awareness; organizing providers and establishing a mechanism for direct contact and/or representation on the Board.

Accomplishments

-Held a multi-day forum on literacy for all members of the community (tutors, students, legislators) who discussed their needs and views for a solution.
-Held seminars open to all Task Force members on resource development.
-Published a regular resource newsletter.
-Pursued grants to benefit the literacy programs.
-Established a new board and held meetings.
-Approved by-laws.
-Established a schedule for technical assistance training.

Learnings

-Strong and continued leadership is extremely important in the formation of a new organization.
-Board development and organizational issues are a time-consuming process.

Contact

St. Louis Gateway to Literacy
Shirley Mosinger
14 Sackston Woods
St. Louis MO 63141
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SAN DIEGO

Purpose

The objectives of this grant proposal were designed to meet the goal of increasing resources in the form of public and private funds plus in-kind contributions to expand literacy services throughout San Diego County in support of the goals of the San Diego Council on Literacy to promote awareness; develop new and alternative funding sources; mobilize, expand and coordinate community resources.

Accomplishments

-Developed a five year Resource Development Plan to address the needs of local providers through raising $3.4 million for programs in the county.
-Provide training in grantsmanship/proposal writing and research for all local literacy providers in San Diego County.
-Built an effective partnership between literacy providers and community leaders: the San Diego Council on Literacy is composed of prominent leaders in the community; the San Diego County Literacy Network is composed of all current service providers as well as potential providers.
-Acts as technical advisor to the San Diego Council on Literacy.

Learnings

-Community awareness is needed before resource development can be effective.
-Leadership needs to be broad-based and to have the credibility in the community to do fund raising.
-There has to be a prominent community leader involved in order to give the group credibility and draw in other key people. This person could be from either the public or private sector.
-An outside person conducting an assessment provides documented information on the community need and a detailed plan and recommendations for use internally and with the broader community.
-Being part of a national project provides the opportunity for community leaders and the literacy providers to be exposed to ideas and practices from other urban initiatives.

Contact

San Diego Council on Literacy
Jeff Stafford
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San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 531-5511

TUCSON

Purpose

Grant funds supported an executive director who helped generate new resources for literacy programs and expanded the Coalition's services of information and referral, networking and expansion of services.

Accomplishments

-Provided a central clearinghouse of local information on literacy programs.
-Developed a directory of adult education service programs.
-Served as a liaison with the AZ Department of Education.
-Generated new resources by promoting community awareness and involvement.
-Networked with literacy organizations around the state.
-Started workplace literacy survey of local businesses as to what impact illiteracy has on Tucson workforce.
-Received local funding for public awareness materials.
-Wrote grant with Pima County Adult Education for bringing literacy into the workforce.

Learnings

-Don't be dependent on just one funder; it's critical to spread out your funding base.
-Instead of director being responsible for day to day activities, she/he should be permitted to focus on fund raising for perpetuation of the coalition.
-A working board and an advisory board are both needed. An advisory board can add credibility but those people usually don't have the time to commit to a working board.

Contact

Tucson Area Literacy Coalition
Candy VerBrugghen
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Tucson AZ 85713
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WASHINGTON DC

Purpose

The grant permitted the establishment of the Metropolitan Washington Literacy Network as an interstate coordinating body, bringing together those providing literacy services in the Metropolitan Washington area under the direction of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. The Metro Washington Literacy Network, through the establishment of a hotline and the updating of the service providers directory, became an information and referral resource for adult learners and volunteer tutors. It also brought together business leaders and literacy providers to begin developing partnerships that will enhance and expand literacy services.

Accomplishments

-Operated the literacy hotline through which 795 students and 605 volunteers were recruited during the first year of operation.
-Conducted a conference for literacy providers in the metro WA area, which over 130 providers and students attended, causing this kind of conference to become an annual event.
-Produced and distributed literacy network brochures to recruit students (7000 copies to date) and tutors.
-Assisted with and participated in the PLUS business breakfast which resulted in 350 businesses attending four regional breakfasts.

Learnings

-In terms of operation of a hotline - the best publicity is public service announcements on television.
-A good tracking system must be developed as part of administering the hotline.

Contact

Metro Washington Literacy Network
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Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments
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